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Over the world's roughest roads

by **MOBYLETTE**

Luxamatic



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AMAZING TRIP BY LONDON JOURNALIST AND HIS WIFE

Sounds fantastic, but it's true—two up, plus baggage, on a 49 c.c. moped and 'it went like a bird all the way'. That's the comment of Mr. and Mrs. W. Speechley who made the overland trip from London to Australia on the amazing Mobylette Luxamatic. It wasn't all easy going as you can imagine, but the Luxamatic was more than a match for mountain and desert roads which the Speechleys described as 'very rough and extremely bad for motoring'. The Mobylette Luxamatic certainly proved that for comfort, performance, and reliability it is unbeatable—even in the most trying conditions.

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IT happened just the way that the Singapore Free Press headlined the story of our trip. They said: 'U.K. COUPLE SET OUT TO SEE THE EAST AND VISIT THEIR SON IN AUSTRALIA'. On form, it was as simple as that!

The route we took was England to France, by plane from Lydd to Le Touquet—then through France, Switzerland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, India and Malaya. From there, we had to sail or fly across parts of the Indian Ocean and the Timor Sea, but from the way the bike was pulling I still think we could have put floats on the thing, and taken it from there!

We had our troubles of course, and once, just east of Istanbul, we looked like being really in the cart. I was having trouble at a one horse petrol station, explaining—in sign language of course—the exact mixture of petrol and oil that I wanted. I couldn't have explained it very well—or maybe we spoke a different sign language—because I only took my eyes off this petrol station character for a split second, and I finished up with a carburettor full of the thickest black oil that I, or anybody else has ever seen!

Now I'm not a good mechanic at the best of times, and I'm practically hopeless with a Mobylette. This is because nothing had ever gone wrong with the previous ones I'd had, so I'd never had occasion to take one to pieces. However, I was lucky, because before I stripped the carb I found, in this tiny little town, a motorcycle shop where the proprietor spoke a little English, an odd spot of French, and a fair amount of German. I had a quick look around his workshop, and decided that the carburettor would be a lot safer in HIS hands than in mine.

Goot Unit

So I quickly explained the trouble, and he had an equally quick look at the bike. He'd never seen one like it before, but he nodded and said, in a friendly manner: "Goot unit easy design—ready in 'arp 'n hour." And it was—practically to the dot! But he decided to give it a road test. Up and down the dusty little street he rode—flat out—and every time he passed me, he shouted excitedly: "Vonderful enchink—Vonderful enchink." and it took me another half hour to get him off the perishing thing.

Before we left England, we knew that many people thought we were just plain stupid to attempt such a trip as this on such a small machine. But Vicki, that is my wife, and I are experienced travellers, and we felt that we knew what we were

Halfway round the world ON A MOPED

Mr. & Mrs. W. P. Speechley's trip to Australia on a 50 c.c. Mobylette via Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and India.

doing! Only the year before we had ridden from England to Lichtenstein and back—on a three weeks holiday—and the year before that on the self same machine, Mobylette of course, we did Spain and back in two weeks flat!

So with a new machine, designed to take two people, and just a little bit of luck, we felt sure that if we left England, as we did, on August the second, then we should see Australia by Christmas. And we did—with ten days in hand.

The beginning of the trip, just poodling through France was a dream! Good weather, good wine, glorious country, and the bike was going like a bird on the wing. But the Swiss Alps gave cause for concern, because we did not want to give the bike too much of a hammering at this early stage.

Beautiful as those mountains are, we were pleased to get out of them, and once across the frontier into Italy the trip became a pleasure cruise once again. Como, Verona, Padova, Trieste—and then into Yugoslavia.

Jugoslavia is a fascinating country! Communist, and with a little more rubber-stamping at the frontier than is usual. The cities, we thought, were a little drab when compared with their counterparts in Italy or France, and it occurred to us, that the citizens were just a little—shall we say Cautious—when talking with strangers. But in cities and village alike, the friendliness and kindness of the people is something which Vicki and I will never forget.

From Nis to Skopje

The roads through Jugoslavia were excellent until we reached a place called Nis. Then from there to Skopje we hit a one hundred and twenty mile stretch of unmade road—and it was a nightmare! Speak to anyone

who has covered this stretch, and they will raise their hands in horror, and say: "But Nis to Skopje!"

Along this abominable stretch we saw vehicles of all shapes and sizes with broken springs, broken chassis, and so many drivers with broken hearts. And the merciless hammering our poor little bike had to take was unbelievable. Something *had* to go—but it didn't and we passed on regardless for Greece.

Greece! We felt we could have stayed there and just lived happily ever after. Lovely climate, beautiful country, delightful people, sunbathing, seabathing, sightseeing—but Australia was a long way off, and Time was the enemy. So on to Turkey, via Salonica, and thence to Istanbul.

Our riding routine up to this point of the trip was quite simple. Unless we had decided to stay anywhere, for a day or so, we would break camp at dawn, have a quick 'brew-up' then Vicki would drive for the first two-and-a-half hours. At an average of twenty, this would give us our first fifty miles, then we would halt, eat, sightsee, or just rest. My drinking time was considered as a 'rest', and frankly, with the ridiculously cheap price of good wine—once out of England—I can think of no nicer way of resting!

Insurance refused

Then, after a short break, I would climb on to the front seat and do my two-and-a-half hours. In this manner, we could really knock off the miles, and since the bike seemed to thrive on it, we often did extra stints, just for the pleasure of riding through new country in the cool of the evening.

We knew that once we were east of Istanbul, the going would start to get really tough! And we knew this, because back in England several

Insurance Companies refused to do business with us once we were past this point. "Mr Speechley," they kept saying to me, "So far as we are concerned, after Istanbul you're on your own." I am now in the position to inform them, that as Insurance Wallahs they weren't bad judges!

We met much truly wonderful hospitality between Istanbul and Ankara, but after Ankara, in those wild and rugged hills, we were chased by packs of wild dogs, and sometimes stoned as we rode through isolated mud villages. We never stopped to find out why we were stoned—all I know is that in the previous year there was a compulsory police escort for this part of the trip, and I, for one, shouldn't have complained if it had still been compulsory.

Yet everywhere we stopped in Turkey we met with nothing but kindness, and I put these odd stoning incidents down to a local 'Teddy-Boy' element, completely foreign to the true nature of the fierce but friendly Turk. And let's be fair—Vicki and I must have looked very strange to them! We were battling through in anaraks, crash helmets, goggles, covered with sand and dust from head to foot—heck—for all they knew we might have come from Mars or somewhere!

The hardest part

From Turkey we eventually crossed into Iran, and I am sure that any Overlander who has travelled this route will agree that Iran, in many ways, is the hardest part of the journey, and the roads—well—the roads just lead in and out of the big cities, and after that there are no roads in the English sense of the word.

It was on one of these so-called roads that we had our first spill! I was doing thirty on a road where I should have been doing fifteen at the most, then I hit a patch of loose shale which put me into a front slide. I managed to lift her out of this—we'd both reached the stage where we could practically correct skids in our sleep—but before I could regain complete control I hit a stone, about as big as a football, and there we were, all spread around in the road.

Vicki fell on top of me, and fortunately she wasn't hurt. Apart from a bit of a shake-up, I wasn't hurt either, but I saw a perfect chance to get a crafty drink, out of hours so to speak. So I did my best to look pathetic, and I said to Vicki "There's a half bottle of Scotch in the off-side pannier bag—get it out

for me, quickly, I've had a terrible shock."

"You've got a worse shock coming," said Vicki, "we've just broken the bottle and the whisky is running all over the road." My luck!

It must be remembered that Iran is as big as France, Germany, Holland and Spain, all put together! But we eventually reached Teheran, the capital city, and the first call we made was on the Motobecane Agent. What a wonderful welcome they gave us! M. Barry, the Director, Gholam Ali the manager, 'Hick' the Workshop Foreman—they just couldn't do enough for us.

Pulling like a train

Also, in Teheran, we were fortunate enough to meet up with some other friends whose son we knew in England. They took us around, showed us the high-spots, and we really lived it up for nearly a week. However, I couldn't take the richness of the food, and if ever I meet the Shah of Persia, I really must apologise for having been sick all over one of his priceless carpets while we were being shown round his magnificent palace.

From Teheran we rode down to Isfahan, because to be in Iran without visiting Isfahan is little short of sacrilege. The going was, if anything even tougher. However, the Motobecane Agent had overhauled the bike, and it was pulling like a train. I had told them to replace anything that was necessary, and it is remarkable to be able to report that no actual replacement was necessary except one frayed throttle-cable.

We took the route out of Iran which is considered to be the hardest, but it was the most direct, and we decided to chance it. Therefore, we left Isfahan and struck out for Zahedan via Shiras and Bam. Sand, heat, hunger, thirst, and whenever we stopped—maybe to clean a plug—there would be vultures wheeling slowly overhead.

It was times like these when I kept my fingers good and crossed and hoped the bike would start. And just before I kicked her over, I would look up at the vultures and say: "Lay you six-to-four she starts." Do you know what? If these vultures had been betting, I would have won a fortune—the old bike never let us down when we were in an awkward spot—not *ONCE*!

After leaving Iran, we very soon hit the Baluchistan Desert, and here, safe in Sydney, I once said to another Overlander who had made the trip: "How did you find Baluchistan?"

He ran his fingers up the frosted glass of his ice cold Australian beer, and all he said was: "Don't mention it, chum, the memory is much too

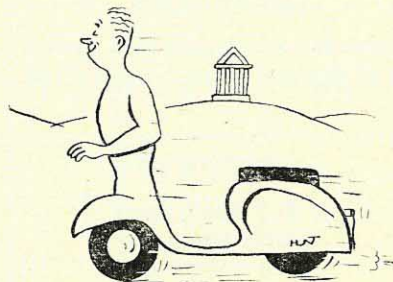
recent!"

Both Vicki and I feel a bit that way ourselves. The only shade we could raise, while we were on that rough old road—for a temporary stop, I mean—was from a ground-sheet rigged up from the handlebars of the bike. And the bike? Well, she'd just stand there, sizzling in the heat with the thermometer at 120—125 Fahrenheit. I would just pat her on the saddle and say: "Sorry, girl," and that seemed to be just about all I could do.

Once in Pakistan, our worries on form, were over! Good roads once again, plenty of English spoken, kindly people, and after a few days rest at Quetta, we pushed on to Lahore and then across into India.

India! The Golden Temple at Amritsar, the Red Fort at Delhi, that wonder of wonders the Taj Mahal at Agra, the Burning Ghats at Benares—both Vicki and I know that we must go back to India.

Strangely enough, it was on the Grand Trunk Road—a joy to ride after some of the rough stuff we had ridden—that I started to get tyre trouble in a big way. I picked up a back wheel puncture, hurried to repair it before dark and put the wheel back slightly out of true. The tyre rubbed the fork, BURST, and the next day, in the heat of the sun, I had nine flats in less than fifty miles. But I couldn't really blame the tyre.



I could only blame myself for being such a silly unprintable.

We spent two wonderful weeks in Calcutta, another few days in Madras, then, since we were unable to get a visa for Burma, we sailed across the Bay of Bengal to Penang and Penang we liked! In fact we liked the whole of Malaya, and then we reached Singapore. Our ride was at an end!

From there, the last leg of our journey, we flew on to Australia, and landed in this wonderful country, happy in the thought that we had come half way round the world, and accomplished a journey which neither of us will ever forget.

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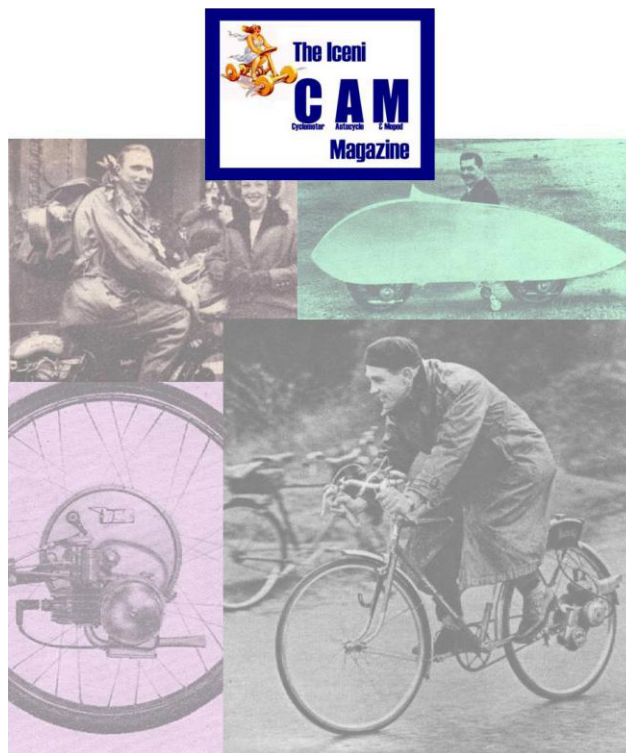
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